



Have an Eco-Friendly holiday!!!



Well, it finally happened. Your father's closet is overflowing with silk ties, your mother's jewelry box is stuffed with "I Love Mom" necklaces, and your niece's playroom is overstuffed with toys. Everyone is just surrounded by "stuff". Think of all the "stuff" that is thrown away each year when the holidays roll around and we bring new "stuff" into the house. This year, why not do something a little different? How about you don't buy stuff, and just give non-material gifts instead? What is a non-material gift? It could be a donation to a charity in that name of the "gift recipient" that is near and dear to one's heart.

- **Homemade Skin Care Products.** Everyone can use a little pampering around the holiday season! Luxury skin care products are something that many people have a hard time buying, but an easy time receiving and enjoying.

To make a simple all purpose scrub, combine Sea Salt with Aloe Vera gel. If desired, add your favorite scent of essential oil to the mixture. Package in a cleaned jelly jar or other glass container you have set aside for recycling. Affix a handmade label with instructions stating "Gently rub onto skin to exfoliate. Let sit for one minute. Rinse well." Punch a hole in the label and fasten around the collar of the jar using a ribbon.

- **Handmade Gifts.** From baking to drawing to knitting, most anyone can create a homemade gift. Perhaps you have a knack for knitting. Take the time to pass down the art and knit socks or hats with your older child to give as gifts. If you are looking for the perfect gift for an elderly family member, (*I really like this idea*) consider recording yourself reading a book on tape. Maybe a recording of your children singing Christmas carols or an art project made entirely by them would be a heartfelt gift that would really brighten someone's day. Giving homemade gifts provides you with an opportunity to show your children that there's more to a gift than a price tag. It's often homemade gifts that are remembered forever.
- **Eco-friendly Purchases.** If you're dying to buy something new for a family member, consider making an eco-friendly purchase. From purchasing clothing and linens made of environmentally friendly fibers (which also have anti-bacterial properties) to purchasing gift baskets made from organically grown local produce, shop with your children and teach them how to evaluate their purchasing choices.

- Gift Certificates for Services. Do you know someone that needs a hand raking leaves in the fall? Or a maid for a day before an upcoming party they're hosting? Perhaps a babysitter so a favorite couple can have a night out on the town? Does your child always ask you to make a favorite special treat? Consider giving a gift certificate that entitles the bearer to something they value, need or long for. In addition to teaching children that sometimes "it's worth the wait" you'll reinforce that when it comes to gift giving, it really is the thought that counts.
- Donations to Charities. When shopping for the person who seems to have everything, consider giving a donation to a charity in their name. There are all types of reputable charities out there and chances are, you can find one that the person you're shopping for would greatly appreciate it. Websites like guidestar.org (*awesome website*) can help you search for the right charity and evaluate the ones you are interested in giving to for financial integrity.
- For families who gather together for an annual holiday party and traditionally give a gift to everyone present, a Yankee Swap can be a great way to incorporate affordable and eco-friendly gift giving. Last year, one family I know had a used paperback theme and everyone brought a book they had recently read and enjoyed.

Once you've decided on the perfect gift, don't stop there. Use the three R's, *renew, reuse and recycle* when considering how you'll package your holiday gifts. Consider using one of these eco-friendly gift wrapping ideas:

- Cut open paper bags and decorate them using paint, crayons, stamps and stickers. Have a family fun night decorating wrapping paper for all of your holiday gifts. If you have small children they will love doing this with you!
- Use old magazines, maps and calendars as creative gift wrap.
- Gather up any unused fabric you have lying around the house and use it to dress up your gifts. Place the gift in the center of the fabric, pull up the sides, and fasten with an elastic or ribbon.

As you enjoy preparing for this holiday season evaluate your gift giving styles and see if there's room a change. Opportunity is knocking and if you open the door, you (and your pocketbook) won't be sorry!

HAPPY HOLIDAYS!

